



Inside Beijing's Improv theater

Improv has exploded since its introduction to the capital in 2006. Beijing now has many troupes offering performances and training in both Chinese and English. This week, some of the men and women building the improv scene weigh in on what the art form has to offer, and where it is headed next in China.



What NGOs have to offer

Low salaries often leave NGOs to battle brain drain. However, many long-time employees say their NGO experience has other benefits that can't be measured in money.

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By Niu Chen

The 19th Beijing International Book Fair (BIBF), which began Wednesday, is drawing 15 more national and regional participants than the last fair.

Hosted at the China International Exhibition Center, the fair will continue daily through September 2. The Republic of Korea is the country of honor at this year's fair.

Yoon Hyung-Doo, president of the Korean Publishers Association, said Korea's presentation at the fair is intended to show how literacy has put the world on a better path and encouraged people to work together for the future.

South Korea will occupy an exhibition area of 2,068 square meters, the largest of any country to date. Its area includes a Korean Collective Stand, used to present Korean publications and engage in business negotiations, and a Korean Cultural Pavilion to introduce Korean culture and literary works from 72 publishers.

Planned exhibitions include an introduction to Korea's Hangeul alphabet, a collection of electronics publications that show off the country's IT strengths, pictures of its UNESCO-recognized cultural and historical heritage, a history of printing and publication in Korea and a recap of the last 20 years of exchange and translation between China and Korea.

Thirteen South Korean writers, including the poet Hwang Tong-gyu and novelist Hwang Sok-yong, will attend the exhibition for events such as Literature Night.

"I am convinced that these exchanges will help Korea and China to enjoy a closer part-

Book fair achieves biggest year

Korea the country of honor at 2012 fair



nership," Yoon said. "I also hope that this special opportunity for cultural exchange will help both countries to deepen their mutual understanding of each other's culture and to help expand the strong ties between China and Korea."

Another highlight of the fair is the presentation of the 6th Special Book Award of China, a national award first presented in 2005.

The honor is given to foreign publishers, translators and writers that have made great contributions to cultural exchanges between China and the world. The award has been given to 27 foreigners such as Howard Goldblatt, the translator of *Wolf Totem* and *The Dust Settles*, and Robert Lawrence Kuhn, the writer of *The Man Who Changed China: The Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin*.

This year's awards will go to six foreigners including Cambodian writer Khlot

Thyda, German sinologist and translator Monika Motsch, Korean translator Kim Seung-il, Spanish translator Taciana Fisac, Principal of Yale University Richard Levin and Joseph Reed, general coordinator of the Culture and Civilization of China project.

"I thought the email that informed me I had been selected for the award was an attempt at fraud, which seemed plausible in my country," Motsch said.

Motsch said that her friends thought she was crazy when she started learning Chinese in the 1960s. She used Tang Seng, the Monkey King and the Pig, three characters in *Journey to the West*, to illustrate the relationship between writer, translator and publisher.

Motsch's past translations include Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged* and Yang Jiang's *We Three*.

Taciana Fisac first took an

interest in Chinese culture when she visited Beijing in 1978. Her translations include *Family* by Ba Jin, *The Red Shirt without Buttons* by Tie Ning and *Fortress Besieged* by Qian Zhongshu. In 2010, she suggested several Chinese writers to write a travelog about their visits to Spain, which she later translated to Spanish as *Journey to Spain: Chinese Narrate Spain*.

"I think Chinese literature's acceptance around the world is not simply related to the country's economic prosperity," she said. "Modern writers do not just carry on old traditions or copy Western writers. China has a large group of eye-opening young writers."

She said the world is willing to know more about Chinese literature and the government is eager to promote it: it's just a matter of time before Chinese literature gains global attention.

The fair has grown tre-

mendously since its first exhibition to attract more than 2,000 exhibitors from China, as well as 75 foreign countries and regions.

The Beijing fair is one of the world's top four book fairs, together with the Frankfurt International Book Fair, London International Book Fair and the Book Exposition of America. It draws more than 200,000 visitors each year and is a key exhibition project in the 11th and 12th Five-Year Plans.

It is sponsored by General Administration of Press and Publication, the State Council Information Office, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Culture, the Beijing Municipal People's Government, the China Publishing Association and the Chinese Writers Association.

The fair is organized by China National Publications Import and Export Corp.

Servoffice International Business Holdings holds media conference

By Zhou Xu

Servoffice International Business Holdings (Beijing) Co., Ltd, formerly Servoffice International Center, held a press conference to announce its renaming on August 15.

The conference was attended by Servoffice CEO Liu Tianbiao, Vice-Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chaoyang District Du Yulian and leaders from the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Founded in 2007, Servoffice provides a one-stop business office solution for enterprises and individuals using its chain of high-end business services. Its 10 centers in Beijing, created during the last five years, help clients to develop advanced business models and localize their products. Its business solutions are practical, pragmatic and innovative, making them perfectly suited to the enterprise spirit.

Cost reduction and efficiency are two of the core concepts of Servoffice. It not only helps international companies to quickly integrate into China, but also helps domestic enterprises in their development.

Servoffice is dedicated to exploring a service model in line with Chinese characteristics, ensuring enterprises' growth and helping them through the entrepreneurial process.



Photo provided by Servoffice International Business Holdings (Beijing) Co., Ltd

Grow with NGOs

How do NGOs cultivate and retain talent?

By Bao Chengrong

NGOs often face brain drain. It's a problem that has haunted them for as long as they've been around.

So how do non-governmental organizations retain talent?

Managers and staffers from three NGOs were interviewed to share their experience recently by *Beijing Today*.

Bei Bei, project manager of Maitian Education Foundation, said their concept is "happy education assistance." As a renowned grassroots NGO in China, Maitian encourages volunteers to do what they can instead of over-extending themselves. Apart from four full-time staffers, all other members do part-time volunteer work.

Full-time employees are expected to be more professional. They often have to handle almost every part of a project, including carrying out proposals, supervising projects, eliciting feedback and handling financial matters.

"We are willing to build a platform for young people to grow, and we respect every member's choice to live a better material life," Bei said. "But as long as they feel culturally connected to Maitian, they can still contribute to us through part-time work."

Maitian is currently looking for a new full-time employee. More than 20 candidates are competing for the position.

Members of the core management team have worked there at least three years, and four have stayed for seven. But regardless of full-time staff, there tends to be a solid rotation of part-time volunteers at Maitian.

More than 5,000 volunteers are certificated after participating in more than 10 activities per year, and they have organizational voting rights. Meanwhile, they can also receive one-day training in the city.

Any volunteer can submit project proposals, which go through an approval process by the Maitian Education Foundation and management team. If approved, the volunteer can choose partners



NGO volunteers participate in an activity.

CFP Photo



Zhu Tongjing, Oxfam officer, trains members on humanitarian relief.

Photo provided by Oxfam

to organize the project team. After that, branches of Maitian that are interested can apply to join in.

Bei said active volunteers can get into a project team very quickly, gain valuable experience and help local members find more opportunities.

Oxfam, as a globally renowned aid and development charity, has a mature system for selecting and training staff. Fan Xiaozhi, manager of human resources

at its mainland base, said apart from recognizing the concept and operating mode of Oxfam, she would also take candidates' majors into consideration. They prefer graduates who majored in social development and sociology.

The new staff will participate in an apprentice training every May. Team managers help their own team members figure out what they have to learn. Meanwhile, members also learn to work in

teams. During apprentice training, new staffers often get the chance to express their uncertainties.

"Another interesting part of the talk is since participants have different work periods, their doubts often vary," Fan said.

Zheng Qi of the policy advocacy team shared her experience at Oxfam. Zheng used to major in plant protection and later studied sustainable development and management of society. She also worked for two years in aid and development abroad.

When she was appointed as a major member of a project team for climate change adaption, she felt like she belonged. Still, she had a lot to learn, so she read all she could on the subject. During the training, she happened to meet a Chinese expert from Canada who was later invited to be an advisor for Zheng's team.

Oxfam gave Zheng the chance to work closely with bosses and contribute in a meaningful way. She was also pleased to be able to do a project that had international implications.

"The income from my work here is much lower than my work abroad," she said, "but

in Oxfam, the long-term project gave me more satisfaction. What you get from the project is future opportunities, perspectives and the people you come in contact with, which can't be replaced with money."

Li Jingdong, public relationship manager of A Better Community, pointed out that volunteers can also be professional. A Better Community aims to recruit part-time volunteers with professional abilities from different educational backgrounds. Their goal is to contribute to public welfare projects.

New volunteers are asked to participate in a four-day training event every autumn. They gather on weekends to learn from professional consultants and make presentations. Corporate partners such as HP cover the training space and cost.

Li said he benefited in three respects. From an emotional perspective, he has made many friends with shared values and concepts. From an ability perspective, he gained many new skills. And last but not most important, he has found the work "self-fulfilling."

That, in the end, may be the key for any company that wants to retain talent.

The future of improv

Exploring the roots of community theater

By Liu Xiaochen

Beijing's first improvisational group was established in 2006: it was only for English speakers. It would be another three years before a Chinese-language improv group became open to the city's enthusiasts.

Today, the Chinese improv circle is booming, and with it the many artistic possibilities.

History of improv

While improvised performance is as old as associated exercises likely developed in the professional actors. Its presentation differs between longer improv performances.

"Improv is very popular in the Western world. Cities may have several. In China it's a relatively new member of Beijing Improv."

Improvisation is well known by young people with their friends.

"There are fixed places for improvisation. Sheng team Deyun She in Beijing," said.

The US has many mature improv troupes. Comic writers get their start by being

"In the US, it is hard to imagine a group. Even if they didn't learn it at school."

Improv grows in Beijing

Beijing Improv was founded only once a week and had no members.

At the time, it was the capital of improvisation.

While it did not start as a Chinese national that is

It now has two performances each month and a Chinese, a weekly intermezzo.

"Improv in Beijing is supportive of improvisation. It comes to realize that"

Hu Xin, who founded the group in 2009 to found the

Hu fell in love with her return.

Plus One, "Beijing Improv" up this group.

The club, Hu Xin, who came to Beijing

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Beijing Improv's workshop



A performance by Beijing Improv



Beijing Improv performs

rov

s acting itself, the modern form of improv theater and its
he Americas in the 1950s.
or sets and make no requirement that the performers be pro-
North America and Europe, with European groups preferring

orld, and most cities have at least a couple of teams. Some bigger
y young scene," said Lottie Dowling, a New Zealander and founding

people in foreign countries, and many attend weekend performances

tional performance. It is popular abroad, and is like Guo Degang's xiang-
Li Xin, the artistic director of Improv First.

roups, such as The Second City, located in Chicago, and UCB Theatre. Many
involved in community improv.

sitcom's writer, screenwriter or actor who has never trained in improv comedy.
ol, they will have to study it once they begin acting," Li said.

g
for fun in 2006 by six expats. They had a small team of improv actors who practiced
regular shows.

ital's only improv group.

a formal organization, today the group is run by a five-member board of foreigners and
lected on a yearly basis.

mance groups, one English and one bilingual group that uses Chinese and English. It per-
at many festivals around the city. It also provides free improv workshops in English and Chi-
diate workshop and a monthly women's workshop.

g is thriving after six short years," Dowling said. "The community here is very interested and
v. After asking improvisers, from other Asian cities about their communities and audiences, I've
t it is unusually popular in Beijing."

ormerly worked as a trainer and translator at Beijing Improv's bilingual workshop, left the group in
the People's Republic of Improv, the city's first Chinese troupe.

ve with improv while studying abroad in the US, and has been working to spread the art in China since

another Chinese improv group for performances, was established last year by Duo Yi.

Improv's bilingual group was full. Its English group only received native English speakers, so I had to set
up because I love improvisation," Duo Yi said.

ity's improv scene has also flirted with commercial ventures such as Improv First, an organization founded by Li
o studied comedy in the US for four years. The group, founded in 2010, provides comedic guidance to TV stations.
efore I went abroad, Beijing's young people only thought about making money and buying an apartment. When I
back in 2010, they were spending time to enrich and entertain themselves," Li said.

But I think improvisation is still at an early stage in China," she said. "It is still confined to a fairly small circle of
ople and is not widely known. I am surprised that none of the students at the Central Academy of Drama and Beijing
ilm Academy have training courses in improvisation."

Planning for the future

The city's improv leaders said they expect to see more troupes becoming involved in profitable organizations, public
projects, training and paid performance.

"There are a lot of branches of improvisation abroad. It is even being used for psychological therapy," Hu Xin said.

"I have learned many skills to make myself open up on stage. That has helped me to be more accepting of others," said
Zhang Chuqi, an improv participant.

"In improv, your unique behavior is understood and supported because the basic rule of improvisation is to 'say yes,'
which means accepting others' ideas," said Wu Haifeng, a member of Plus One.

Hu Xin said improvisation combines elements of management, psychological counseling and spiritual growth. Her
group has many participants who are psychological counselors, teachers and managers of human resources.

"Some of the participants are perfectionists and are strict about their own actions. In time, they learn to let go and stop
limiting themselves," she said. "Others lack self-confidence and take time to overcome their stage fright."

"I think the best thing about improvisation is that it makes people find themselves," she said.

"My friend recommended improv groups to me. Now I introduce them to young people who have difficulties in communicat-
ing," said Lily Chen, a psychologist. "Improv has a therapeutic effect for patients with minor communication difficulties."

As a public interest organization, Beijing Improv's proceeds are donated to Huadan, a local NGO that introduces theater
to communities of migrant workers.

"Beijing Improv is committed to keeping its activities as financially accessible as possible. We think it's important that
everyone has access to the arts, and so the group is committed to staying a non-profit organization," Dowling said.

"The members all sign an agreement that their performances will not have any remuneration," said Zhong Na, one of the
group's members.

"I hope we continue to be run as a non-profit organization, because I think trying to make money is impetuous. When
you don't have to worry about making money, you have access to better social resources," Duo Yi said.

Hu said her goal is to tour China and send a Chinese style of improvisation abroad.

"I also want to enter the school to teach children to develop their emotional intelligence," she said "Domestic education is
too restrictive. At the workshop, I found Chinese people like speaking rather than using body language."

As the only one running a profitable improve group, Li Xin is planning to make custom training programs the troupe's
main business.

"Making it into a profitable industry will help us to find excellent young artists so the organization can grow and flourish. This is
how to promote an emerging industry," Li said. "People can spend all their energy on developing it when it is their full-time job."

Li said he sees potential in the comedy videos being created by netizens, and hopes that talent can help him build a Chinese
improv troupe that is as strong as The Second City's.



Actress Zhang Chuqi at Improv First's performance

Photo provided by Improv First



"Play Out Loud" by Peo-
ple's Republic of Improv

Photos provided by
People's Republic
of Improv

Improv First's performance

Photo provided by
Improv First



People's Republic of
Improv's workshop



Photos provided by Beijing Improv

An artist of uncanny confidence

By Charles Zhu

He is a very different artist, a different person. He is different from others in style, personality and talent. With extraordinary self-confidence, he isn't at all shy about calling himself one of the best 10 artists in China.

This is Fan Yang, 57, the vice president of the traditional Chinese painting department at the Chinese National Academy of Arts. His ink and water *gongbi* work, "Sending Supplies to the Front," painted with great attention to detail in 1984, is on permanent display at the National Gallery of Arts.

Fan is noted for using free-wheeling, wild, crude inky lines to delineate mountains and rivers without conventional dabs or splashes. When portraying human forms, he uses refined touches of ink to form a unique contrast between parts and the unified whole. His lines are sharp and rough like the cuts in seal carvings, and yet dialectically as fluid and soft as river water. Critics describe him as a flying horse galloping in the heavens, free, unhindered and at great ease.

Fan's four-meter-long pictures *Farmer and Cattle, On the Path to Mount Yandang* and *Buffalo Tilling the Land in Southern Anhui* show his extraordinary talent and mind for artistry.

He has studied such masters as Wang Yuanqi and Dong Qichang of the early and late Qing Dynasty, and Huang Binhong of the 20th century. His mountain and river paintings are believed to be influenced by Huang's style.

However, he does not confine himself to what earlier masters have achieved. He unreservedly integrates



Fan Yang's works about Chinese villages



Photos provided by Charles Zhu

modern elements, Chinese and foreign, into his pictures. There are some similarities between Fan's pictures and Vincent Van Gogh's and Paul Cézanne's.

In the last few years, Fan has tried to learn from Tomioka Tessai. When he discovered that Tessai had learned from Pu Hua, a late Qing Chinese painter, he began studying Pu's paintings. However, his strokes are much stronger and sharper than Pu's.

Fan was born to a well-known family of scholars and poets in Nantong, Jiangsu Province. His uncle is Fan Zeng, one of the current leading artists in China who is particularly known for his ink and brush portraits of ancient beauties and widely acclaimed in Japan.

"If I can live to be 80 years old, I will be the second Qi Baishi, one of the greatest masters of the 20th century," Fan said.

His confidence is hereditary: one of his relatives was Fan Zhong'an, a high official of the Song Dynasty. His maternal grandfather was one of the first students who went to Japan to study, and who later became a banker.

"Such an intellectual family gave me an ideal – a need to set strict demands upon myself and have cultural responsibility," Fan said.

His artist uncle Fan Zeng told him that as long as one has a piece of paper and a brush, one can paint like Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci. Fan Zeng described learning painting as a lion

hurling itself upon an elephant with all its claws open. Instead of teaching him technical skills, the uncle gave him inspirational encouragement that has benefited him throughout the lifetime, Fan Yang said.

After graduating from high school, Fan entered a local institute of crafts and arts where such masters as Wu Guanzhong, Huang Yongyu, Yuan Yunsheng, Han Meilin and Fan Zeng all came to teach. Fan said that this period was very important for his artistic career. He learned papercutting, drew designs for embroidery and spent time copying Song pictures. The dynamism of local art helped him lay a solid foundation.

Fan said that before he

reached age 50, he had mainly tried to integrate Oriental and Western elements, and after 50, he came to Beijing and tried to integrate southern with northern Chinese elements. He believed that such integration is a basic condition for a master.

He said there are three stages in an artist's career: learning from ancients, nature and one's own mind. He believes that he is now in the second stage. His *Sketches in Southern Anhui* marks such a turning point.

Fan has attained such artistic perfection, critics say, that he can say like Picasso: whatever I paint is art. Fan said himself that if you have attained excellence in ink and water, even if you paint a glass, it is a good piece.



Authentic and wallet-friendly Chaoshan flavors available



Fried tofu, crispy outside but tender inside

By Annie Wei

Due to a series of gourmet programs and articles reporting on the cuisine of Chaoshan, a very small region of southern China, more Chaoshan restaurants have opened this year.

The new Chaoshan Yujia at Taiyanggong and Wangjing locations have won praise from Chaoshan natives.

"There used to be very few Chaoshan restaurants in Beijing," said restaurant owner Sun Wenlei, who also runs an air-conditioning company.

The biggest Chaoshan community is at Xiluoyuan, between South Second and Third Ring Roads. "There were also quite a few living in Zhongguancun," Sun said. "Very few live in the Wangjing area."

Last year, he worked with many Chaoshan people for a construction project. When they dined at some so-called "Chaoshan" restaurants, the workers said they were not the real deal.

"To have authentic Chaoshan flavor, you have to have Chaoshan chefs," Sun said.

He visited Chaoshan during Chinese New Year and fell in love with the flavor. "It does not use a lot of oil, like Sichuan food; the fish are freshly caught from the ocean," Sun said.

Sun said that many cuisines in China are influenced by trends, but Chaoshan food maintains its essence. "The people are very stubborn," Sun said. "In Chaoshan, people believe in what their food should be and must be."

However, "expensive" and "high-end cuisine" are what many diners look for, which is problematic when it comes to Chaoshan food.

"When you are in Chaoshan, the food is not expensive," said Sun. High-end Chaoshan cuisine started in Hong Kong, where 40 percent of its population was originally from Chaoshan, including many tycoons and super-rich.

Sun's idea is to bring street-priced Chaoshan cuisine to more customers. All ingredients are flew from Chaoshan, and it has 28 chefs of Chaoshan natives.

Sun said the optimal way to consume Chaoshan cuisine is to have someone at your table who knows something about it.

Like most restaurants in Chaoshan, the one in Beijing has no menu. Customers check out the ingredients on display on the table and create their own orders. For Chaoshan natives, their style is even simpler: sit at the table and ask the waiter, "What is the freshest fish today? OK, get two of each kind."

A variety of fishes, ranging from 18 to 138 yuan, are highly recommended. Unlike fish from Jingshen Seafood Market, they are freshly delivered in cold water. The fish in Jingshen is frozen. The



Big-eye fish, 58 yuan per 500 grams, steamed and paired with fermented bean sauce

Photos by Xu Tianpeng



Chaoshan's various kinds of fish are unknown to most local diners.



This snack made of sticky rice and a Chaoshan plant, tastes sweet and delicious.

texture and flavor are noticeably different.

The restaurant has quite a few selections of wines from Europe and South America. But the best drinks for Chaoshan food is its tea, starting from 28 yuan per pot.

We tried its wudong danzhong, starting from 28 yuan per pot, strong and flavorful.

Chaoshan Yujia

Where: B2, Kaide Shopping Mall (Exit C, Subway Line 10, Taiyanggong Station) 12 Taiyanggong Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Where: Building 3, 3 Wanghua Lu Dong Li, Wangjing, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6470 8658

Pearson Longman English World

costed / cost

- ✗ The book I bought yesterday costed \$120.
- ✓ The book I bought yesterday cost \$120.



'Cost' does not take '-ed' for its simple past or past participle form. It stays the same, in the way a few verbs such as 'cut', 'put' and 'hit' do. One exception is when 'cost' means to calculate the costs of something:

- ✓ The renovation work was costed at \$100,000.

taached / taught

- ✗ My father taached me how to swim.
- ✓ My father taught me how to swim.



'Teach' is irregular; the simple past is 'taught'.

Exercise

Choose the correct words:

1. cost (give the correct auxiliary verb or none?)
That meal last week _____ \$ 150 each.
2. teach (give its simple past form)
He _____ me Maths for two years.

Answers: 1. cost 2. taught



Book title:

Common English Errors in Hong Kong (New Edition) 是一本专门为香港初、中级英文水平的学生所编写的自学教材。本书指出并纠正大量本地学生所常犯的英文文法与字法使用上的错误，并附有非常生动活泼的插图，深受青少年学生的青睐。

资料来源: Language Leader (Pre-intermediate) by Ian Lebeau and Gareth Rees (Pearson Longman)

Designer items

By Annie Wei

Nuandao.com, a new online vendor, aims to bring customers cool limited edition items.

Here are some inspiring, fun and functional items we've found nowhere else in town:



The Plunge Lamp

A simple, round pendant lamp is good for many interior designs. The Plunge pendant, created by Danish design team Says Who, was inspired by a common household item – the toilet plunger.

The lamp is made of wire, solid oak wood socket and silicone shade. The designers sent their design to TheCreator.Me, a social-commerce platform that turns ideas into products. It was quickly snapped up by many customers who enjoy buying design items.

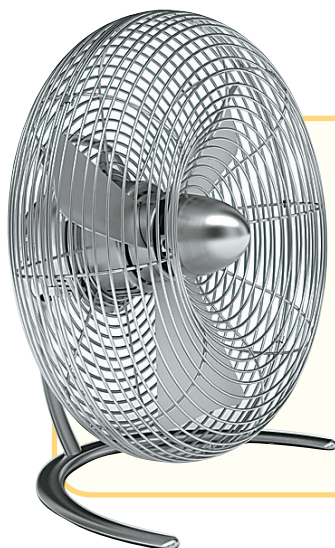
Cost: 888 yuan



Funny tab

The cute animal tab cover adds some lightness and joy to boring daily routines.

Cost: to be determined



Stadler Form fan

Have you ever heard of "air-conditioning sickness?" It refers to people, especially office workers, who get little exercise but work all day with strong cooling systems.

But how can one can get through a hot summer day without AC?

Chinese traditional medicine doctors recommend using a fan pointed at the wall. It can stimulate indoor air flow and reduce the temperature.

The Stadler Form fan, by a Nordic designer, is popular with people who like industrial and modern styles.

Cost: starting from 1,998 yuan



Handpresso

When you travel to a remote area, do you get frustrated that you can't find decent coffee? Handpresso is the solution for you. It's a German-made compact hand-operated espresso machine that doesn't require batteries or electricity. It's light and easy to take around when you go hiking or picnicking. It can brew strong coffee.

Cost: starting from 1,225 yuan



Heel-station

The heel-shaped stationary is an ideal gift for any woman who likes shoes.

Cost: starting from 143 yuan

